

THE STORY
OF
A "TOWN HOUSE"

By
Mabel Hoyle Knipe

THE STORY OF A "TOWN HOUSE"

*A compilation of fact and legend
concerning the Town Hall of
Fairhaven, Massachusetts*

Architect: Charles Brigham
Donor: Abbie Palmer Gifford Rogers
Dedication: February 22, 1894

*Material Researched and Integrated
By
MABEL HOYLE KNIPE
Fairhaven, Massachusetts
June-1977*

DEDICATION

This Research Project
The Story Of A "Town House"

— *is respectfully dedicated* —

to

the memory

of

— *the one who gave it* —

ABBIE PALMER GIFFORD ROGERS

M.H.K.

GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A HOME

The erection of the Fairhaven Town Hall in 1894, and its presentation to the town by Mrs. Abbie Gifford Rogers filled a long-standing need. From the incorporation of the town in 1812 to 1894, the citizenry did not possess any public building for the accommodation of civic officers in their management of town affairs or for the holding of town meetings. The latter were held in various places. Very early meetings (1812-1817) were held in the old Methodist church at the Head of the River

During the rivalry which finally culminated in the separation of Acushnet from Fairhaven there was intense enmity between contingents of the far-flung town. Each wished to secure locale of a permanent "Town House." Finally, Fairhaven adherents managed to gain the vote which would place the "Town House" at Oxford. There it was built in 1843. However, in 1858 a fire of questionable origin destroyed the building. It was suggested that incendiaries, in anger and jealousy, were responsible for the destruction!

After this time, town meetings were held in Sawin Hall and in Phoenix Hall until the present Town Hall was completed. There is evidence to suggest that Fairhaven citizens were realizing acutely the need for a town building specifically designated for civic business — when a few years before the Rogers' gift — the Town Meeting voted \$1500 for a new "Town House."

Z. W. Pease, a reporter for "The Fairhaven Star," stated in the dedicatory issue of the newspaper

"Fairhaven has her new building but \$1500 would not pay for one of the stained glass windows which ornaments it."

THE DONOR ABBIE PALMER GIFFORD ROGERS —

Abbie Palmer Gifford Rogers was the daughter of Captain Peleg W. Gifford, a whaling captain and native of this town. She was born in Fairhaven in 1841, and grew up here, school-mate and neighbor to Henry H. Rogers, her future husband.

In 1862 she married Mr. Rogers in Fairhaven, and went with him to live in the oil fields of Pennsylvania, where he was to commence a meteoric rise in fame and fortune.

Mother of six children, Mrs. Rogers is represented as having been of a quiet and retiring disposition, completely devoid of the ostentation often associated with great wealth. Contemporary photographs attest to a shy and gentle charm of feature, and she is known to have cherished a deep affection for Fairhaven and a nostalgia for the simple ways of her childhood.

She was, therefore, delighted to become the donor of Fairhaven's beautiful new "Town House," and on February 22nd and 23d, 1894, she attended dedication exercises and received graciously at the splendid Dedication Ball, in the first gala functions marking the opening of the new building.

It was not given those attending these happy festivities to know that but three months later in May, 1894, this gentle woman was to die in New York City after an operation performed to save her life.

Yet, because Mrs. Rogers cared so deeply for her town, it seems appropriate that we particularly remember her at the great Dedication Ball in her lovely Worth gown of black velvet with a diamond sunburst in her hair greeting her fellow townspeople as gracious hostess.

THE ARCHITECT

The architect chosen to design the Fairhaven Town Hall was Mr. Charles Brigham, a Boston architect of considerable repute. Prior to this assignment, he had designed the Millicent Library, dedicated in 1893. He was later to be involved with the raising of the Rogers summer home, the Tabitha Inn, the Unitarian Memorial Church with its parish house and manse, and the Elizabethan magnificence of the Fairhaven High School.

Mr. Brigham was born in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1841, and served through the Civil War. At the age of twenty-five, he entered into partnership with Mr. John H. Sturgis, an association that continued for twenty years. Beautiful homes in Boston and Newport were designed by Sturgis and Brigham, and this partnership produced opportunity for valuable early experience in residential architecture.

Among many assignments, Mr. Brigham is responsible for the Church of the Advent on Brimmer Street in Boston, for wings of the State House, for the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Boston, and for the Institution for Savings building in New Bedford, Mass.

Mr. Brigham was ably assisted by other partners, notable among whom was Architect Coveney who was a long-time student of medieval church architecture, and evinced great skill and originality in his design. Mr. Henry Bisbee, a native of Fairhaven, became another close associate of Mr. Brigham, particularly during the building of the Fairhaven High School, and was largely responsible for the direction of this project. Mr. Bisbee has stated that practically all plans for this edifice were drawn up at a field office erected on Huttleston Avenue just opposite the site of the construction. In 1906 the firm of Brigham, Coveney and Bisbee was organized.

In all the Rogers projects Mr Brigham was given absolute freedom to indulge his architectural talents with no interference and without regard for expense.

Mr William Collett served as supervising architect for the new building. He was in almost constant residence in Fairhaven for a period of three years in charge of the work on the Millicent Library, the Rogers mausoleum, the greenhouses of the Rogers estate and the Town Hall.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS

THE CORNER STONE

The corner stone for the new "Town House" was laid on May 30, 1892. Master Henry H. Rogers Jr aged twelve used a silver trowel to perform the rite.

DIMENSIONS

The building is 99 feet in width. Its depth is 108 feet.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The architecture is French-Gothic. The talent of the architect is demonstrated in the fact that while the interior of the building is symmetrical in plan — the exterior has irregularity of outline. This differentiation creates variety of aspect to each view-point; yet each of the principal sides is complete in itself and satisfies by a happy unity.

BUILDING MATERIALS

(Exterior)

The lower exterior is constructed of broken ashlar granite from St. George, New Brunswick. Caps, coigns and sills are of Red Beach, Maine granite.

Above the stone work, the building is of "Delmonico Brick" with elaborate terra-cotta ornamentation. The brick derives its name from the fact that the color was designed for the Delmonico Building in New York City. The Fairhaven Town Hall was the second building ever to utilize this rare shade of soft red.

The roof is of red slate, and all the hips and ridges of the smaller gables are ornamented with copper crockets, while the ridge of the main roof is surmounted by a heavy copper cresting.



Fairhaven Town Hall

(Interior)

Utilized extensively throughout the interior of the building is magnificent quartered oak polished to high lustre. Use of this beautiful wood is particularly effective in the looping of the great double staircase leading from the ground floor to the auditorium. Stained and rippled glasses are used provocatively, and bronze and brass are employed in the many chandeliers and light fixtures.

The original furnishings of the building were made on special order for the ultimate in utilitarian comfort. There were heavy oak tables and arm chairs in Bank of England style upholstered in yellow leather

THE AUDITORIUM

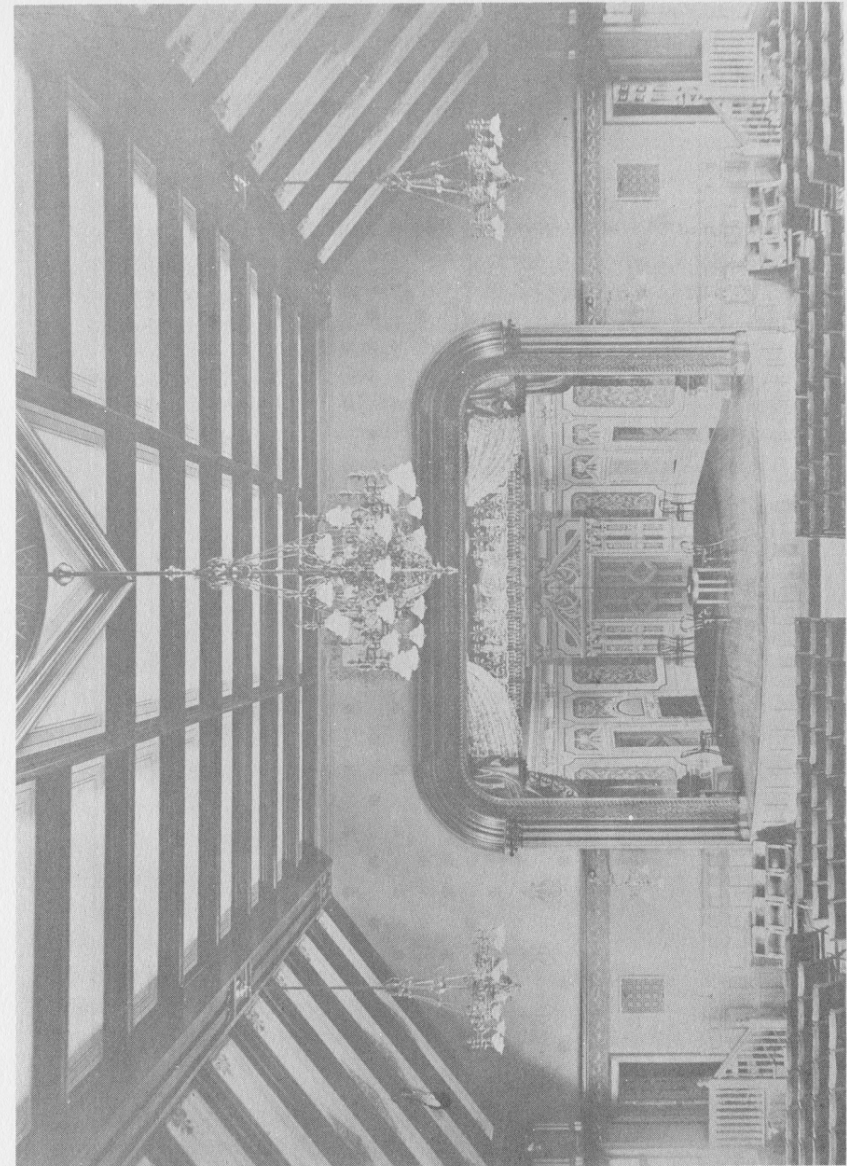
When, on February 23, 1894, the great Dedication Ball was held, guests ascended the lustrous oak staircase to large dressing rooms at the top of the first flight. Later, they stood at the entrance doors of the auditorium and looked upon a room of exquisite beauty.

The auditorium is 52 feet in length from north to south, and 63 feet in breadth. The lofty ceiling is gambrel-shaped, and is laid out in heavy oaken beams in regular panels. There is a heavy cornice of oak supported by clusters of columns, and there is a massive dado of quartered oak.

Spectacularly placed are three large windows one each in the gables of the east and west sides, and the other on the south rear wall of the gallery. The glass of these windows is stained in parts and divided into trefoils, lozenge and diamond shapes, with interesting medallions. The upper areas of the windows are tastefully colored in shades of green and red in a uniquely blended effect, producing a medley like tapestry. In the medallions are placed handsomely executed paintings in sepia representing:

- A view of Fairhaven from the bridge
- A locomotive
- A ship
- A stage coach
- An Indian camp
- The capture of a whale
- The "Mayflower"
- Fort Phoenix

The passing years have mandated utilitarian changes in the lighting, but initially, the auditorium was lighted by a great bronze chandelier made in the style prevalent in the reign of William II, and having twenty-four lamps. Four additional chandeliers of ten lamps each provided more illumination, and many side brackets brought the total of lamps to eighty-eight.



The Town Hall Auditorium

The hall seats 800 persons 650 in the orchestra, and 150 in the balcony.

The highly polished maple floor is, in itself, a miracle of beauty. In accounts of the Dedication Ball, this floor is especially mentioned as being reminiscent of "a great silver lake." For many years, this floor was always covered with duck when dancing was not in progress.

THE AUDITORIUM STAGE

The stage is 43 feet wide and 25 feet deep. At the time of the building's erection the stage equipment provided was comparable to that of the best theaters in the country. Initially, ten sets of elaborate scenery were provided. These were beautifully painted on linen, and provided the following locales:

A Parlor; A Rustic Kitchen; A Plain Chamber; A Stone Prison;
A Light Landscape; A Fancy Garden; A Perspective Street;
A Dark Wood; A Mountain Pass; and An Horizon.

There was an asbestos fire curtain and an elegant drop curtain painted by Frank Hill Smith, eminent decorator

THE TOWN HALL OFFICES

At time of building, the post office was located in the tower room on the south-west corner of the Town Hall. This area has now become the Tax Collector's office. Details of the decor of the original post office will be found on another page.

Across the loggia, in the south-east corner, is the Town Clerk's office. At building erection, these quarters were sumptuously fitted with counters of oak, a screen ornamented with leaded glass — and roll top desks. In this office there is a fire proof vault with metallic steel cases large enough to contain all town documents at the time of building. There were provided three additional vaults in the basement. It was estimated that this total vault space would be adequate for preservation of town records for generations to come.

Ascending a few steps from the loggia, one enters the grand staircase hall. On either side is a massive oak stairway leading to the auditorium promenade. The newel posts are richly ornamented and surmounted by bronze standards jappanned in black with three electric lanterns on each.

Through a richly decorated archway is a wide corridor at the end of which is a roomy banquet hall. On either side of the corridor are large oval rooms. On the east side is the Selectmen's office with its adjoining room for

the Chairman. Here very beautiful windows capped with stained glass arches immediately catch the eye as does a unique fire place built of Perth Amboy brick.

Opposite, on the west side, a corresponding room was set apart in the deed of gift for the personal use of Mr Rogers. This room is now used by the Town Assessors.

Next, north, on either side, are similar light and airy rooms — the one on the east used for the Superintendent of Schools until locale for this department was transferred to the junior high school, and later, to a School Administration Center in 1962. The room opposite on the west, originally used for Assessors and Town Improvement Society, is now used for the Registration of Voters.

In all of these offices, still, there is the gleam of beautifully carved quartered oak, the glinting of colored glass and leaded pane and heavy, sturdily-constructed oaken tables, arm chairs, and bookcases. Miraculously, over eighty years of hard and consistent use these offices are still spacious, comfortable and functional retaining much of the original exquisite detail.

THE DEDICATION

February 22nd, 1894 dawned bright and sparkling in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. This day was unique for three reasons. It was Washington's birthday; it celebrated the 82nd anniversary of the incorporation of the town; and it was the day on which the elegant new "Town House" was to be presented to the town in dedication exercises.

For many weeks there had been excitement and anticipation among the citizenry. Every day since the corner stone had been laid in 1892 — the townsfolk had gathered in knots to watch the rapid progress of architect, engineers and work teams raising the new building, which was to be presented by Mrs. Abbie Gifford Rogers, wife of Mr Henry H. Rogers, who had been generous benefactor on so many other occasions.

Mr Rogers and his wife were close personal friends of Fairhaven's townspeople for they had both been born in this place had gained fame and fortune elsewhere and now often came "home" to attend town affairs and talk with old acquaintances.

The beautiful Rogers Grammar School where the town children were being educated had been a gift of Mr Rogers in 1885, as had the Millicent Library, completed in 1893, and standing just across the street — proud memorial to Millicent, the young daughter and sister mourned by the Rogers family. Now, on February 22, 1894, this elegant "Town House," ready for dedication, stood new and glistening the shining keys of which would be presented this day to Selectmen.

Interest and excitement were rife in the town. Bunting, double-dyed and chromatic, decorated the banks and business places; and residences, ornate and humble, showed flags and emblems. A crowd began to assemble at noon before the lovely loggia of the new building, and the amateur police department, unused to such numbers, had difficulty handling them.

Tickets had been mailed to every voter and tax-payer in town, and nearly a third of the auditorium had been reserved for special guests. Since there were only 800 seats available in the hall, there was much eagerness on the part of those in possession of the coveted pink paste-boards to be among the first admitted. A narrow wicket had been built without the door to impede the exuberance of the crowds but inasmuch as the doors were not opened until two o'clock the pressure from behind became very great. Indeed, those who were nearest to the entrance were literally forced through the narrow pathway often never surrendering their precious tickets! When, at last, the hall was crowded in every part, and the corridors and stairways were jammed, the crowds outside had not become noticeably smaller

A large orchestra and chorus were seated at the rear of the stage and performed throughout the exercises with rare enthusiasm. The apron of the stage bloomed with a great bank of orchids from the conservatories of Walter P Winsor.

Mr. Rogers, his wife, Mrs. Abbie Rogers, and his mother, Mrs. Roland Rogers, occupied seats on the west side of the main aisle. Others in their party were: Mr and Mrs. William E. Benjamin, Mrs. Bradford F Duff, Miss Rogers and Master Harry Rogers. Applause first broke out when Mr Rogers led in his friend, Mark Twain, who looked very distinguished in a Prince Albert coat, and wearing his grey hair in long and leonine styling.

At 3:15 Governor Greenhalge and his party arrived from a special train. They were met at the railroad station by a committee comprised of Selectman Bryant, Representative Gillingham and other notables. As the governor entered the hall, the band played "Hail to the Chief," and there was hearty applause from the audience. Among members of the governor's party were: Mayor Matthews of Boston; Pres. Butler of the Senate; Pres. Meyer of the House of Representatives; Charles Brigham, building architect; President Charles Clark of the N Y., N.H. &H. Railroad and editors of Boston's leading newspapers.

Job C. Tripp, president of the town Improvement Association, presided and introduced the speakers. The Presentation Address was delivered by Mr. William Crapo of Dartmouth and New Bedford. His words were appropriate and meaningful, as were those of James L. Gillingham, representative to the General Court, who spoke on behalf of

the town. Gov. Greenhalge, wearing a pink flower in his lapel button-hole, looked bright and fresh, even though he had presided at arduous functions in Boston earlier in the day. When the governor arose to speak, it was growing dark, and the electric lights throughout the building were turned on at a signal — from the clock tower to the basement! This dramatic procedure delighted the audience.

Yet the hit of the afternoon was made by Mark Twain, who, easy and nonchalant, drawled his address with delicious humor. In an informally composed satire on oratory in general he deprecated its usefulness on such an occasion, and declared that only the building itself could speak with inspiration. His first paragraph follows:

"By a thoughtful and judicious allotment of the privileges of this occasion, each speaker has been appointed to the function best suited to his capacity, his character, and his credit in the community. Chief of all the speakers, and the most eloquent, stands the building itself. It is its easy office to declare to you the love of its builder for the town which was her birthplace and the home of her girlhood. It may be trusted to say its say well; and be understood; and be applauded from the heart; and to occupy the platform longer than anybody else, and make the only speech that will be printed right in the papers. Yes, and it is the only speaker of us all, gifted and popular as we try to let on to be, that can dare to stand up here and undertake to hold your unfatigued attention for a hundred years. Why, we couldn't do it for forty!"

In his graceful acceptance speech, Mr John I. Bryant, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, spoke as follows:

"We come here today not only to dedicate this building but to dedicate ourselves to a fuller measure of duty as citizens and a larger devotion to the principles of pure and unselfish government.

"And now, in behalf of the Selectmen and on behalf of the inhabitants of Fairhaven, we accept this munificent gift, and return to Mrs. Abbie P Rogers our sincere thanks.

"She has more than fulfilled her promise to the people of Fairhaven, and through her great generosity, this community will attain a higher degree of moral and mental growth.

"May she be spared to see in her life-time the first fruits of this gift, as the riper harvest will surely be seen by her children and her children's children."

On the evening of Dedicatory Day, the entire building was thrown open to the public, and hundreds of people availed themselves of the opportunity to inspect it. Many extra electric and horse cars were run to

accommodate the throngs from New Bedford. The building was brilliantly lighted, and for the first time, the face of the clock on the tower was illuminated throughout the night.

Commencing at eight o'clock, the Boston Germania Orchestra played an extensive concert. Presented, were solos for piccolo, trombone and cornet; and a selection from "Faust," a Strauss waltz and an overture by Von Suppe.

EXCERPTS FROM SPEECH OF PRESENTATION

The speech of presentation for the new "Town House" was delivered by William W. Crapo of Dartmouth and New Bedford. Portions of this speech are singularly appropriate to current civic issues. As the citizen of today reads Mr. Crapo's splendid, ringing oratory, and soberly considers the essence of his message — much that was presented therein assumes startling applicability.

Such excerpts from the speech follow:

"We meet today to dedicate this edifice to the public uses of Fairhaven. There has been erected a structure admirable in its design, faultless in its arrangements, perfect in its architecture and complete in its adaptation for the performance of the usual and necessary business of the town.

"This magnificent building, which will stand as a monument reminding coming generations of an act of munificence and enlightened benefaction, is dedicated to the purposes of local government."

"Such a community is capable of self government. But it rests with you how perfect will be your attainment of it; whether you will enjoy its highest privileges, or will suffer them to slip away from you. If Fairhaven is to be well and wisely governed, you must do it yourselves. Every man must contribute his share of interest and service according to his ability. Every man must do his own part — not by proxy, but in his own person.

"Good government or faulty government is simply the difference whether you manage your town affairs or have them managed for you. The danger which comes to town meeting government is the apathy of the voter, his indolence and unconcern, his indifference to public question, and his neglect to vote.

"What better thought can I urge today for your consideration than that a man owes something to the community into which he is born; that he has duties as well as rights; that his love of country, pride of liberty, respect for justice can be measured only by the service which he renders and the sacrifices which he makes for the community of which he is a part."

In making the actual dedication Mr. Crapo said:

"Love of Fairhaven prompts this gift. A warm-hearted attachment for the town, which is endeared to her by many associations and a desire to benefit those who dwell therein have moved the donor to this act. Her wish is that this town house may prove a substantial benefaction to this people by bringing them together for closer union, for higher and broader culture, and for concerted philanthropic endeavor, that it may become a village center

"In this spirit and with this hope, Mrs. Rogers offers this contribution to Fairhaven, and she asks you, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Board of Selectmen to make her intention effective and complete. She asks you to accept this title deed and these keys that the town may become the absolute and legal owner of this property."

THE DEDICATION BALL

It is said that Fairhavenites have always liked to dance! When it has been necessary to make a little money for a worthy cause — an evening of dancing has been in order. Indeed, the annual ball for the Fairhaven Poor Society was for many years the prime social event of the locality and attracted adherents from all parts of town, and even from the metropolis across the river!

A waggish correspondent of the *New Bedford Morning Mercury*, when speaking of the financial success of the Poor Society galas, wrote:

"They were so tremendously successful from a financial standpoint, that it was predicted that the town would be an exception to the Scriptural assurance that 'the poor ye have with you alway!'"

What more appropriate way, then, of celebrating the opening of the new "Town House" than a great Dedication Ball? This was held in the new auditorium on the evening of February 23, 1894. Spirit was still running high after the splendid dedication ceremonies of the day before, and spectators' seats on the stage and in the balcony were filled at an early hour. Again, the Boston Germania Orchestra played brilliantly, and spectators had opportunity to gaze upon the intrinsic beauties of the auditorium, for no artificial decorations had been used — and the elegant ball room was so new, colorful and sparkling that none were needed.

Shortly before nine o'clock, Mrs. Henry H. Rogers, Mrs. Walter P. Winsor and Mrs. Edmund Anthony took up positions on the west side of the hall where guests were received. Mrs. Rogers wore a Worth gown of black Lyons velvet trimmed with rare point lace. She wore a magnificent diamond necklace, and there was a sunburst of diamonds in her hair. Mrs. Winsor wore a pink satin gown bordered with mink and with draperies of

pink chiffon. She had roses in her hair, and about her neck, a miniature set in diamonds. Mrs. Anthony wore antique moire with trimmings of white lace.

The ball opened with a grand march. The number in the splendid array was nearly two hundred couples, and the line was so long that there was no beginning or ending to the circle, and the evolutions were necessarily limited to a brief promenade once or twice about the hall. A correspondent of the *Fairhaven Star* reported:

"It is an old-fashioned custom, the grand march, obsolete at many balls, but it is a very stately and gorgeous one. There were the vivid crimson and gleaming beryl and majestic black and gold, of silk and satin and brocade. There was the light enveloping cloud of tarleton and tulle in pale blues and pinks and creamy whites, saffronized by the creamier whites of the arms and shoulders they adorned.

"The glittering procession which opened the ball trailed slowly along like a great bright-hued sparkling serpent with diamond scales over the waxen floor which shimmered like a silver lake."

Walter P Winsor led with Mrs. Rogers, and Mr. Rogers followed with Mrs. Edmund Anthony. The dancing started with a quadrille and was followed by a waltz, and then

"the floor blossomed out into a swaying mass of color like a flower bed swept by the wind.

"and with waltzes and polkas and two-steps, the ball tossed and undulated down to the usual end a few hours before the morning breakfast hour."

The guest list for the great ball sparkles with names historically reminiscent of the area. Some of these were: Almy, Sawin, Tripp, Winsor, Allen, Potter, Howland, Knowles, Anthony, Nye, Church, Pope, Wing, Damon, Duff, Swift, Eldredge, Lawton, Bryant, Bisbee, Cook and Pierce.

And so was held the greatest social celebration Fairhaven had ever known and they all went home to the rattle of the milkman's cans in the street!

THE USES OF THE "TOWN HOUSE"

DRAMA

Probably the first theatrical venture presented in the fine new auditorium was a series of dedication performances. One of these was an old military drama called *Rosedale* by Lester Wallack. This work was staged on March 5, 1894 by a stock company of Boston Grand Opera. A week later, further drama was promoted in a work called *Unity Club* enacted by out-of-town performers.

On April 13, 1894 there was a "Greate Synginge Meetynge" in "ye New Town Halle in ye Towne of Fayrehaven." This entertainment featured a chorus of sixty voices.

On December 8, 1894 *The Trustee*, a four-act drama, was staged by members of the High School Association. These performances are cited as early illustrations of a great number of dramatic productions that have sparkled on the spacious auditorium stage of the "Town House." Indeed, over the years, the splendid facilities have been extensively employed. Town records show consistent rental arrangements with individuals and groups for dramatic purposes.

During the period of the mid-twenties through the mid-forties, two amateur theatrical groups performed delightful "little theatre" productions. The Fairhaven Players and the New Bedford Spouters presented almost simultaneously — very worthy entertainment of near professional excellence.

At one time, the Fairhaven Players numbered about 600 members supportive of the acting units. For an annual fee of two dollars, members received two tickets for each of three productions given annually. There was salutary rivalry between the two groups and most of the productions of both groups over an approximate twenty-year period were presented in the Fairhaven Town Hall. These presentations delighted an area audience becoming ever more sophisticated in theatrical matters. A conjecture would suggest that some fifty productions were sponsored by these two dramatic groups alone.

In the mid-forties, Mr. Anthony Farrar introduced the "star" system in a series of summer theater productions using local talent as supporting casts to professional "guest leads." The "Town House" auditorium was used for several years of these summer offerings which attracted good area audiences.

THE FAIRHAVEN IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Fairhaven Improvement Association has been a consistent user of the "Town House." In the banquet hall, it held regular meetings and dinners for many years. Occasionally, this group has sponsored good musical offerings with professional talent in the auditorium. In 1919, for

instance, this organization sponsored a much-discussed program of cello, flute, horn and a Russian tenor! It will be remembered that Mr Rogers set aside one of the first-floor offices as a permanent "home" for the Fairhaven Improvement Association, respecting as he did — its generous membership and civic conscience.

THE BALLS

Many have joyfully danced in the Town Hall! In 1896, the Poor Society held its famous annual "money-maker" here, as did the Tennis Association in 1919. However, one of the *great* balls, second only to the magnificent dedicatory affair, was a town "Victory Ball" to raise a "welcome home" fund for returning Fairhaven soldiers of the First World War. This ball was held on April 25, 1919. There was dancing simultaneously to the music of *two* orchestras. One played in the banquet hall where the more conservative citizens did square dances. The other delighted a great crowd in the auditorium with "mod" music!

In recent years, there has been a renewal of ball-room dancing. The Fairhaven Mothers' Club has sponsored splendid dances, and in 1962, during Fairhaven's sesquicentennial celebration — a great "Queen's Ball" was held in the Town Hall. Our national bicentennial year in 1976 was celebrated by a "Bicentennial Ball" which attracted a glittering crowd to the "Town House." This was the fifth consecutive ball held by the Fairhaven Historical Society, 1972 — 1976.

TOWN HALL MOVIES

In 1921, town fathers were bitterly complaining in the annual Town Report that expensive repairs were necessary for the Town Hall after twenty-five years of hard use. They decided to rent the auditorium to a company which would present "Town Hall Movies." This venture was advertised as: "Another Big Week of Pictures in America's Finest Town Hall!" Hopefully, the venture would earn big profits and pay some of the reparation bills. The plan was very palatable to townspeople. Offered first on Saturday only — the program gradually expanded to a three-day run. Double and triple showings were popular. Mary Pickford, Buster Keaton, Fatty Arbuckle, Norma Talmadge, Mary Miles Minter and Cecile B. DeMille brought release to the adult citizenry and delight to the "small fry" who were offered a prize of *ONE DOLLAR* for the best essay on *THE MOVIE I LIKE BEST!*

THE REST

In the meantime, sandwiched in, somehow, the more sober uses of the "Town House" were being accomplished. Annual Town Meetings, school music festivals, eighth grade and some high school graduations,

innumerable lectures have been held in the auditorium. Banquets, caucuses, war activities, and small-group music rehearsals have functioned in the banquet hall.

The spacious office space on the first floor has been agreeably adaptable to carrying on the town's mundane business, and, for many years, the police and postal facilities (the latter rented to the government for a fee of \$304 annually) were sufficient for town needs.

Thus, the "Town House" has been site of pleasure and useful service for all Fairhaven citizens over a critical period of war, depression, social change, and tremendous expansion throughout the entire area.

IN ABSENTIA!

Two important services were recognized by the architects in planning for the "Town House." These were the postal quarters and the area devoted to the town constabulary or in plebeian terms the "Lock-Up."

THE POSTAL SERVICE

The first post-office in Fairhaven Village was established in 1820, in the ell of the house of Joshua Drew who lived on the southeast corner of Main and Center Streets. Joshua Drew thus became the first post-master (1820-1842).

The postal services were later moved to the Phoenix Block and then to a building on the southwest corner of Center and William Streets.

Hereafter, Mr Brigham and associates provided magnificently for postal needs in the new Rogers Town Hall. Before plans for this service were finalized visits were made to many of the country's first-class post offices, and the Fairhaven facility combined the conveniences and amenities of the best systems evaluated.

The architect located the postal area in the southwest corner of the new building — in one of the tower rooms. Thus, it had a separate entrance from the loggia. A postal screen of quartered oak carried 569 boxes with brass frames and bevelled plate glass. There were two delivery windows with bronze grills and rippled glass screens.

In the postal area, the postmaster was provided with a work room with a fire place. There was also a private lavatory.

As the town grew, the postal services were removed to the Masonic Building on Main and Center Streets, and thence to the federally erected and endowed structure on William Street.

Today the erstwhile postal area in the "Town House" is used by the Fairhaven Tax Collector and the town Nursing Association, but many of the original features are apparent as interesting memorabilia.

THE POLICE STATION and LOCK-UP

The Police Station and Lock-Up were located in the northwest corner of the basement. There was a separate entrance on William Street and no immediate connection with the rest of the building. In this area there were three sturdy cells of good size with iron doors, and there was a room for tramps or other "lodgers" provided with eight or ten bunks. There were also a good-sized guard-room, a sleeping apartment for the officer in charge, a toilet room, a lavatory and convenient closets.

Such amenities must have overwhelmed Officers Nye and Delano, who seem at the time of the dedication — to represent the entire regular constabulary of the town! These two officers are described as "likely to have nervous prostration" in their efforts to control the crowds assailing the "Town House" entrances on Dedication Day!

This area served the needs of the Fairhaven Police Department until, in 1964, the present modern police and fire station was erected on Washington Street. Since that time the Department of Public Works has functioned in pleasant offices adapted to the needs of personnel in wise utilization of this space.

IN GRATITUDE

The following transcription is from the commemorative tablet honoring Mrs. Rogers and located in the entrance hall of the "Town House."

"This building
was presented to the
TOWN OF FAIRHAVEN
February 22, 1894
three months prior to the
death of the donor

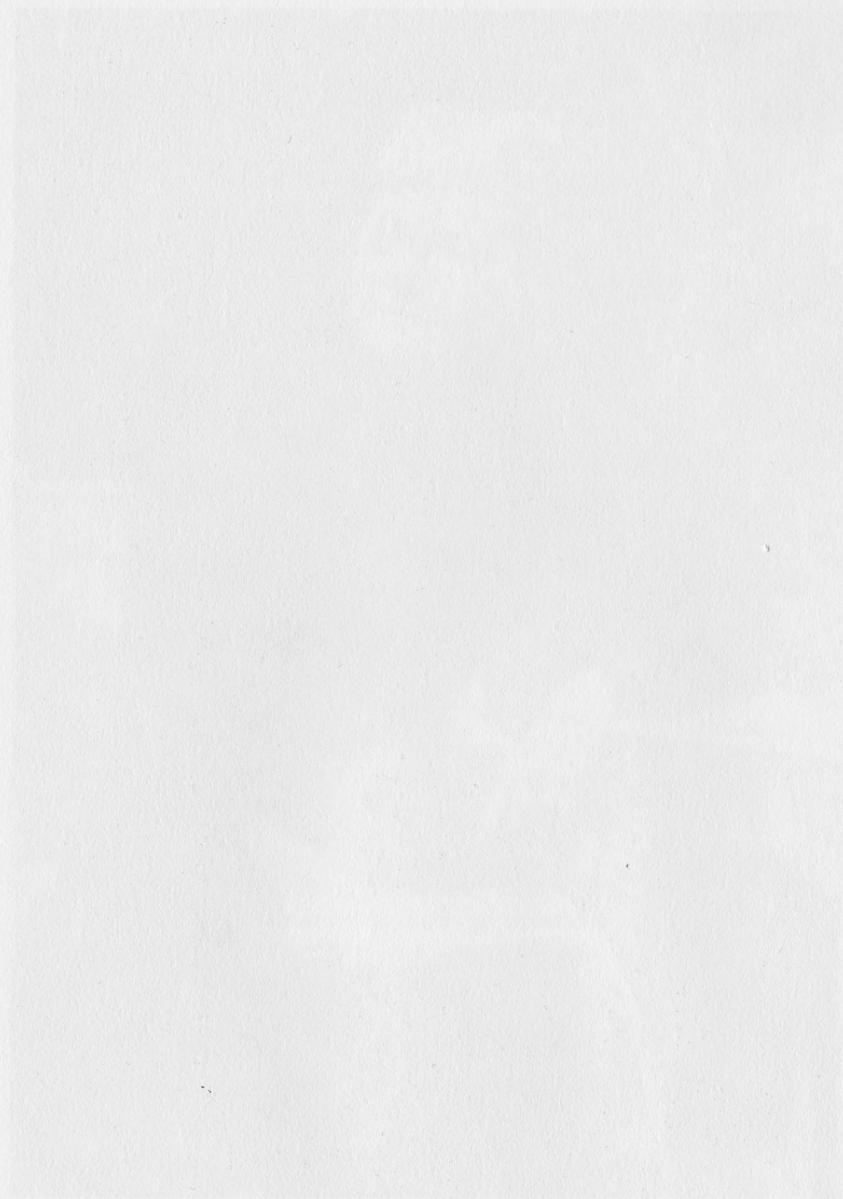
ABBIE PALMER GIFFORD ROGERS

The people of Fairhaven
in expressing their appreciation
and gratitude for the gift
would also record the sorrow
they feel as a community
through the loss of one whose
life was full of good works.

May this structure
in its strength and beauty
ever stand as commemorative
of her character and
thoughtful kindness."



Abbie Palmer Gifford Rogers



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

